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**Spoilers ReadMe for *A Harper's Tale: Escort Duty***  
By JO Cool

*Life has no meaning but what we give it.*

*I wish a few more of ye would give it a little.*

~Elminster of Shadowdale

*Gather round children of Faerûn for 'tis not often in a lifetime or two that a being of our world is able to witness such a glorious event unfold. That is why, with every fabric of my soul, I shall impart upon you a tale of such simplicity in the grand scope of normal events, yet wrought with purpose for the betterment of our existence. A time that will soon know trouble. A time, where moments before, the world will almost seem to stand still. A harrowing time, in which one young hero will return a grateful favor and create a Harper's Tale.*

**[Player Note:] – MOD Info** - This is a Spoilers ReadMe file for a series of Neverwinter MODS entitled *A Harper's Tale* by Dave Mason and SideStep. Following are many words of wisdom, advice, hints, and simplified walkthrus as told through the eyes of the Old Mage of Shadowdale himself, Elminster. Each of the fictional sections told by Elminster are in italicized text for easier reading within this document, but can be skipped if the player chooses just to get to the notable sections. Continue to read on if you seek some answers or direction in your adventure, but be warned that some of the truth you seek may spoil the tale that will soon unfold before your very eyes. Any forthcoming sections noted (as this one) with the bolded '**[Player Note:]**' title are for you, the player, and not part of the characterization behind this ReadMe file.

*It is not easy to explain the power that I hold over the weave upon Toril that I call Art. I do not say that in a boastful way or try at all to jest, nay belittle, your understanding of the power that we all have within us. I tell you this so that you may try and grasp why I have the ability to tell a story yet to transpire. I, Elminster of Shadowdale, have traveled into the depths of our world, taken on the power of the Magelords, witnessed the destruction that can be caused by Spellfire, and touched the divine face of Mystra herself. These, and many other noteworthy travels, have given me the ability to see beyond my own existence and travel to other worlds, both distant and parallel to our own. I dare not reveal all my secrets or pretend to know of how my abilities have grown, but I will say without any doubt, that I have lived through this story as if it were my own. It was in the exact time and place where you now begin to take those brave steps and return a favor to an old friend that I also labored. The events that unfolded in my parallel beginning may have taken on a completely different course, but I will share my experiences with you, all the same, so some mistakes can be avoided and rewards truly discovered. Let the great bards of all our worlds sing of the Harper's Tale.*

**[Player Note:] – MOD History** - It is the Year of the Prince, 1357 in the Dale Reckoning. In the weeks immediately preceding the journey to Thunder Gap undertaken by the PC in response to a call from their old friend Calum Neigh, great events have

taken place to the North and East of here, events which still have tongues wagging amongst the common folks and gentry alike as the PC makes their way through these modules.

The kitchen girl turned thief, Shandrill Shessair, through a strange combination of circumstances came, like her mother before her, to hold the uncanny power known as Spellfire. Working alongside the Knights of Myth Drannor, and the great mage Elminster, she slew two dracoliches, undead bone dragons of the Cult of the Dragon – and indeed, unleashed enough power in slaying Rauglothgaur to destroy the very mountain within which he made his lair! This, and the not inconsiderable feat of slaying his mount, a black dragon, out from beneath Manshoon of the Zhentarim, leader of Zhentil Keep, and forcing him to retreat, close to death... Small wonder people talk in awe of these events.

But other, smaller problems face these lands too, and the Harpers, ever conscious of the doings of those who threaten the greater good are in need of an adventurer... a hero who can be trusted with a vital task which will benefit all good people in this part of the Realms. It is this task that begins the series of adventures that together comprise ‘A Harper’s Tale’.

Within the year, the Time of Troubles will come upon the Realms, and the Year of Shadows will prove to have been well named. This series of MODS will encompass all of the horrors and changes brought about by this event – magic failing, spells going awry – and gods walking the face of Faerun in the form of mortals. From humble beginnings, the PC will come to stand amongst the great of the land, and walk amongst heroes, and gods.

## **Chapter 1: Escort Duty**

**[Player Note:] – Important Info** - If you have played *A Harper’s Tale: Prelude* and had *A Harper’s Tale: Escort Duty* loaded in your Neverwinter Nights Modules folder, after telling Calum you are ready to move on to the assignment you were summoned for, Chapter 1 in the saga will automatically load. If you are starting from scratch (not having played the Prelude) with *A Harper’s Tale: Escort Duty* your character will have to meet the following requirements:

Must be of human, half-elven, or elven descent

Must be a non-evil alignment (any goods or neutrals)

Must be at least level 8 (If you are too much higher than that, Chapter 1 won’t be much of a challenge.)

(We encourage players to use either male or female characters because the adventure is tailored to reflect the gender you decide to play.)

After you receive the main assignment from Calum, be sure to head over to Claud’s and stock up on some new wares. Not only has his shop been upgraded from what he had in the Prelude, but you will also find a couple of very useful custom items as well. As in

the Prelude, it is worth checking out Claud's "ordinary" stock too - he also now has a couple of Bags of Holding and Magic Bags which can be very helpful for weaker characters.

*I had answered the call from an old friend and found myself almost ready for the real task at hand. Before heading east to report to Thordan Applegreen in Highmoon, I noticed Claud seemed to be taking a break from unloading a new shipment of goods and decided I should have a look. 'Tis a good thing I did stop by because Claud had received some nice new wares indeed.*

*Even though I was fully loaded and ready for the trip east, I decided to venture around Thunder Gap Village one last time to make sure the area was safe for the good people of this settlement and because I had a nagging feeling that I was forgetting something.*

**[Player Note:] – Hidden Chests** - As mentioned in the Prelude Spoilers ReadMe, there are many custom items that can be found throughout this series. Two important hidden chests that you will find in nearly all of the areas with encounters or of special significance are the Shimmering Chest and the Rune Chest. The player character's ability to "discover" these chests is based on their Search skill and, if not of elven descent, turning on their Detect Mode (for a little extra help). In the next section we will guide you straight to the spot where each of the chests are hidden and explain the rune or talisman that you will find in more detail. If you choose to discover these on your own in this area just search all around the village and see what turns up.

**[Player Note:] – Shimmering Chest** - Head up the hill behind the Temporary Harper's Base and go past the stream and cavern on the right, all the way to the south east corner. Wait at that dead end and within a few rounds you should see the Shimmering Chest appear. You may find it faster if you put your character into Detect Mode and move around in the area facing various directions in the dead end. (When I was writing this I had a human fighter that had a Search skill of 4 and was in detect mode and it still took about 10 seconds to find it.) The Shimmering Chests found throughout this series are full of random goodies for your character. If you want to find the Rune Chest that has an important random magical item (along with some other goodies) read on to the next section.

**[Player Note:] – Rune Chest** - Back in the completely opposite location of where you found the Shimmering Chest, up the hill to the left past Claud's, head all the way to the north west corner. Eventually the Rune Chest will appear and, aside from a few goodies, a random rune or talisman will be part of the treasure (there is a good chance that you will find one tailored to your characters class! 😊)

For this little walkthru, no matter if you found a rune or talisman, the magic will work the same. Although you may have a different type and use it on a different item than that of my example, the principle is the same. The description on the magic runes and talismans hint towards some of the items you can enchant with them, namely basic accessories and jewelry that does not already have a magical enchantment. In my case, I

had purchased a Basic Helmet from Claud (if you want to, do the helmet first, then run to Claud's real quick and continue). Place the helmet, or item of your choosing, on the ground in front of you. (The magic only works if the target item is removed from your pack.) Then click on and use the unique power of the rune or talisman and apply it to the item on the ground. In my case, I had a Rune of Constitution and applied it to the basic helm, making an awesome new Runic Helmet of Constitution that gives the wearer +2 to their constitution stat. You may find that the item is unidentified at first so by using a Potion of Lore or going to Claud's (you may want have a few Lore Potions on hand, or Identify scrolls if you can use them, because you may find a Rune Chest far from a store) you can identify the new item and then equip or sell it. As a little cheat you can save the game right before opening the Rune Chest so that you can reload if you get an item not tailored to your character's class. But if you like to take what the game gives you don't worry because there will be plenty more of these chests to discover throughout the series! As mentioned before, at least one of these and the Shimmering Chests can be found in each area with encounters (with this first exception to give you the opportunity to discover them in the beginning). However, we won't lead you specifically to anymore of these chests and spoil too much of the fun in discovering them on your own.

Finally, be sure to speak to 'Little Jim the Twit' before you leave the village. These village idiots are throughout this part of Faerun, and will eventually prove to be important... plus, there's a (small) experience bonus for doing this!

*Maybe it was Mystra herself that guided me to look around the village area more thoroughly, but whatever it was, I was glad I did because I came across two different types of magically hidden chests that materialized right before my very eyes and contained valuable common and powerful magic items along with some sparkling treasure. At first I thought it was a trick or a simple magic illusion sent by a new enemy, but then I could see that this magical chest had an aura of power surrounding it. I checked it for traps and found none, then dared to open it.*

*One of the chests contained a rune explaining its power and I decided to give it a try. I placed a basic helmet I had just bought from Claud on the ground in front of me and read the rune aloud then touched the helmet. The rune began to crumble through my fingers as a powerful surge escaped my hand and transformed the helmet into a mysterious glowing magical helmet. Something mystical and special had transpired, but I headed back to Claud's to let him have a look and confirm that I had just created a Runic Helmet of Constitution. Indeed a very useful piece of equipment to increase my stamina for this new adventure. It was then that I knew I should keep my eyes peeled for any other mystical gifts like this!*

**[Player Note:] – Road to Highmoon** - As you begin your travels you will find yourself venturing through a swathe of creatures bent on your destruction. The path to Highmoon is divided into three "legs" along the road east to Highmoon. The first leg in this journey is pretty straightforward. There are many creatures to get by and some of the animals (under the control of the more intelligent creatures somehow) will drop a slab of animal flesh after you put them down. This is important only if you have purchased the Magic Cooking Hot Plate at Clauds. If so, just use the Hot Plate with some of the meat in your

inventory and you'll gain another useful item to heal yourself with, along with some minor experience using it. You can continue through all three legs of this road, fighting through the hoard, but if you're at all curious about the Indestructible Dragon that Calum warned you about, then take a detour to the Valley Road Cave in the north section of the second leg just beyond the well.

*Now I knew that this would be a dangerous road to travel, but I hadn't a clue that I would be so quickly swarmed by all walks of creatures along the way. If the Iron Throne meant trouble then imagine my dismay when orcs, trolls, ogres, gnolls and other controlled forest dwellers were awaiting me with a bloodthirsty look in their eyes. I could never be sure if the Iron Throne was behind it, but I knew there was more here than meets the eyes. Why would the wild animals in this region attack only me while standing next to a gnoll shaman? How was it that so many simple minded creatures, that usually waged their own wars all worked together in an attempt to end my existence? This was a perplexing detail that I intended to get to the bottom of.*

*I happened upon the remains of another poor soul next to his travel cart and immediately understood why he lay there with arrows protruding from his chest. Suddenly, arrows from all directions began raining down on me and I had to run to the nearest assailant and began to methodically make my way to each one clearing out these ranged threats. There were many, to be sure, but my healing potions, and the fresh meat I cooked on this new magical hot plate that I bought from Claud helped me thin their numbers enough to continue my journey.*

*I was about halfway through on my road to Highmoon when I came across the cave entrance near the well that Calum had warned me about. I knew the business at hand was important, and a very powerful black dragon was something that no man, or woman for that matter, in their right mind would desire to face. Still I had to at least check it out and see if maybe I could snag a bit of the dragon's horde, unnoticed I had hoped, and then be on my way to Highmoon. I prayed to Mystra as I entered that cavern that just maybe my luck would change and "Blackie" would be fast asleep, or better yet, dead!*

**[Player Note:] – The Indestructible Dragon** - The first cavern you will enter shouldn't be too much trouble. A few more angry bears, some aggressive big rats, and a few annoying little bats. After you work your way north and head through the entrance to the Valley Road Cave: Lair, things will certainly start to get interesting, but not quite yet. First, as soon as you enter this lair, instead of snooping around and looking for the Black Dragon, immediately turn to your left and wait. You should see a hidden trap door appear right in the corner near the entrance. Go ahead and clear out down there first. The first area in this dungeon will be quiet, but there are some hidden chests to find. Then the next series of halls and the main room will also have more encounters and goodies. Finally you can go up to the other side of the cavern you were just in that wasn't reachable from before, but which is accessible from the third leg of the road to Highmoon. Keep your eyes peeled because there are more hidden chests in this little area too. Now, backtrack your way to the lair (it shouldn't be too bad because in the dungeon room with the stairs you can take the other door you haven't been through yet, avoiding the need to backtrack all the way through the hallway area that wound its way

up to here). However, you may want to note that these corridor areas will re-spawn enemies, so more loot and experience is available here if you want to re-visit. Once back in the lair don't go all out yet. Save your game and prepare for some fun looting!

Hopefully by now you've got the hint to stock up on some useful potions. In this place the Potion of Clarity and of Speed are invaluable. This area is a simple large lair set up with two open solid paths to the left and right and a narrow wooden bridge through the middle. This middle area is the key to looting the dragon's treasure and staying alive. I will say this only once - DO NOT even try to fight this dragon, without cheating (indestructible and no weapon level restrictions) you won't survive the fight. We went up against him with 20<sup>th</sup> level characters and still had trouble. So the key is to take your potions (it would be a good idea to quickslot them too) and head over to the dragon from either side. Lure the dragon to you, if you used a potion of clarity it's all right for him to get kind of close – but only “kind of”! Once you feel like crapping your pants, take off back around towards the middle bridge, but don't get too far ahead of the dragon. He will pursue you to the middle area and then have to make his way all the way back around either side, while you run straight up and start looting his stuff. Don't dally too long in the area with his hoard. You have time to get about one or two chests, depending on your luck, then get the heck out of there. Continue to use this strategy as often as you would like but remember, after you scored some stuff and you are in the clear... saving is a very wise thing. There are some very useful items stored all around his loot and, in that very area, some Rune Chests to entice you to take more of a chance with finding them. Play this area smart and you will walk away with a happy and loaded character. (Oh, and if you're getting close to overloading your character you better have a Strength Potion handy too. Nothing's worse than becoming encumbered with powerful black dragon on your heels.) Of all the stuff you can loot out of here, and there is a lot of good stuff, one of the coolest custom items to find is in the left chest in the very corner of that center part. It is here that you will find a chest full of goodies and a mysterious small item of great importance. Read the next section if you don't want to discover for yourself what that item is.

**[Player Note:] – Bulgar's Bird Whistle** - If you've decided to brave looting the black dragon, in the visible normal wooden chest on the left, you will find a slew of valuable items and a small miscellaneous item. Make that your first score and then run back away to get the dragon off your tail. Once you're in the clear, save your game and then identify (hopefully you have more Lore Potions, or you'll have to wait to use this) the small item. This is Bulgar's Bird Whistle, which is a “once-a-day unique power” custom item that will summon various types of flying creatures to help you in your travels. Now there are some downfalls to this item as you will see, but there are some big perks as well. Take your chances and experiment a bit, even in this lair with the black dragon, because depending on what creature or creatures you summon you can keep using that earlier strategy and have your summoned help distract the black dragon for a bit while you do some more looting. Be careful though, because this charm also has a randomly generated time limit! (He, he, he, he... we love this little whistle!)

**[Player Note:] – Finishing the Road to Highmoon** - After you've completed your devious romp in the dragon's lair, you can continue east on the road to Highmoon. Depending on your class and character's strength, some of you may be pretty overloaded at this point so you have to decide if you want to head back to Claud's or move on to the stores in Highmoon (this is why Bags of Holding and Potions of Strength are our friends). If you continue east the areas will be pretty much the same all the way there, plenty to fight along the way and many hidden goodies if you search in the right spots. The cavern entrance in the third leg is the same one I mentioned earlier that you may have already cleared out from the dungeon ascent. The other thing worth mentioning is that you will also come across a group of fire beetles right before getting to Highmoon that has a Hive Mother that may put up a pretty good fight, so be ready.

*I never knew I had it in me to run so fast. Looting that awesome black dragon was both terrifying and exhilarating...I'm lucky to be alive. I figured a way to keep him at bay for a bit because he couldn't cross the bridge in the middle of the lair while I grabbed a few of his valuables and ran back around to the entrance. I'm certainly glad that worm is as large as he is and can no longer get out of his prison lair, because if so, I wouldn't be telling you any of this today!*

*I cannot emphasize enough the worth of that detour. I found this unique little item and after drinking my last Lore Potion, it became magically clear to me, and I could sense all of its details. It was Bulgar's Bird Whistle, and once I tested it out I was thoroughly pleased. I blew out a little tune and three rather intimidating gargoyles appeared at my side. They followed and defended me as we continued east. I knew not how long I would have them in my control, but that didn't seem to matter because on the last leg of the initial part of my journey I came across a powerful hive mother beetle that quickly disposed of my summoned friends and gave me a run for my money. Still, in the end I prevailed and decided to take a rest to gain back some of my strength. I awoke, refreshed and continued on the road to Highmoon, but not before giving this little gem of a whistle another whirl and to my delight had four helpful little fairies in tow. Oh what a discovery indeed!*

**[Player Note:] – Welcome to Highmoon** - Since you're probably overloaded with goodies upon entering Highmoon, one of the first things you may want to do is visit any one of the three stores in the area. There is one small shop in the Golden Minotaur Inn and two others shops in town. (The shop in the inn is least generous when buying from you.) You may immediately remember that you need to meet Thordan Applegreen in the Golden Minotaur Inn to claim the prisoner for your escort mission. However, if you've taken some time to snoop around the town first, you will see from some of the news you pick up and after you have meet with Thordan or the Mayor, that there is a more pertinent task at hand, one that charges you with finding the missing little girl named Alwynne and her nanny.

Even though this document is called a "Spoilers" ReadMe file, we think it is in the player's best interest to discover some of the non-essential, but very helpful and rewarding sides quests on their own. If you desire, there are many other things to do in Highmoon (and one beyond Highmoon that you'll need to come back for) before finding

Alwynne, her nanny, and beginning the prisoner escort. These side quests include, Yohnson Wedek's major rat problem, Sully Throatlasher needing something heavy fixed and brought back to Highmoon (which you won't be able to finish until you get to the next town) and, even though you don't receive a journal update, Asmal M. Bargo would sure appreciate you finding his fiancée. These side quests, some broken items that can later be fixed, and those elusive hidden chests (another example of them being in an area of significance rather than an area with encounters...starting to see the theme yet?) can all be found in the busy little town of Highmoon – which also boasts its own village idiot.

*Even though I had not traveled a great amount of distance to get to Highmoon, I was still weary from the road, my elusive dragon looting, and the horde of creatures I cut my way through. So I made my first stop Golden Minotaur Inn for a tall drink and was very pleased with the selection at the bar. After downing a couple of well-deserved brews, I noticed a small shop in the inn and decided to lighten my load before trying to find the one named Thordan.*

*Richer and more relaxed, I continued to the upstairs area of the inn and spoke to the guards at the end of the hall. Apparently they had been expecting me and I figured I would find Thordan behind those doors. But, what I didn't find was the prisoner because Thordan insisted that I instead focus my abilities on helping the local mayor by finding his missing daughter, Alwynne and her nanny. I know that this prisoner escort is a mission of great importance, but so is the safety of an eight year old girl. So before wasting another moment, I headed off to the south in the direction that Thordan told me they had gone to picnic.*

**[Player Note:] – Havering's Missing Daughter** - If you are all set with shopping or completing some side missions if you want to do those first you can head south towards the Path to Arch Wood (West). This area is a quaint little spot that has the Highmoon Park Picnic area and a couple little angry badgers. There's not a whole lot to this area except this hint, trashy broken things can be fixed (eventually)! To search for Alwynne further you'll need to follow the stream that flows to Archwood (West). This area will contain a few more savage forest encounters and some more insidious spiders. Make your way around to the east side of the area and you'll see a little grove with Alwynne sitting staring at butterflies. After conversing with her she will follow you back to her father's house. Bring her back to daddy and he will reward you and then continue to tell you about her nanny that (if you choose to) gives you another mission.

**[Player Note:] – Find the Nanny's Body** - If you accepted this mission from Mayor Havering you will have received the key to the crypts and some background information. Make sure you're well equipped (some Potions of Clarity wouldn't be a bad idea if you character gets easily affected by fear and maybe a Potion of Strength for carrying Dorian's body) and head down to the Highmoon Crypts right across from the Golden Minotaur Inn. The first level of this crypt area has many rooms to explore and the one to the extreme left is a chamber with the undead Dorian in it, but you will find that you cannot reach her because of a fence. You'll have to make your way down the hall on the right and descend to the crypt's second level. Here you will find some pretty tough

undead archers (among many other things) and have to make your way across to ascend back up to Dorian's side. Finally you will speak to Undead Dorian briefly before knowing that the only way to finish this mission is to finish her off! Hopefully you have some room left in one of your bags or, if you are a weaker character, a Potion of Strength because Dorian is "dead" weight. ☺ (Of course, you can also put her remains in one of your trusty bags of Holding!) Make your way back around the way you came, through a few more undead, and head back up to the Mayor's so he can hopefully work some of that resurrect magic on the nanny. Once this is complete you can continue to do any side missions that are still outstanding, if you haven't already, then head back to Thordan to finally get the prisoner escort mission underway. Of course, you could have gotten the prisoner first, which can be very helpful in recovering Dorian.

**[Player Note:] – Import Info** - If you have finished the Alwynne mission you will see that the prisoner is now with Thordan. He will give you some details of the escort to Ordulin and a magic amulet that you must keep in your inventory to keep him/her (depending on your gender) in your control. You are now ready to say good-bye to Highmoon and head out east on the road to Ordulin. One very important thing to note, your new travel companion is crucial to this chapter and has the same rules of survival as you. If you OR he/she dies then the MOD is over. The prisoner is a pretty tough cookie and will help out tremendously, but it is still advisable to save often!

*For such a small town, Highmoon certainly has its fair share of problems. Maybe all of this happened because I showed up here, but whatever the reason, Calum better appreciate all that I've done for these people.*

*I found Alwynne and brought her back to her father. He was grateful for the return of his daughter but asked if I could also venture out again to find her nanny. Again the prisoner would wait because I just can't let someone die for all the wrong reasons.*

*However, once down in the crypts I almost ran back out of fear of the walking dead. These creatures were worse than any I had faced so far on my short journey. The way they crept to me, with their unnaturally decaying bodies, sent a chill down my spine. I had to descend all the way through a second level area to make my way back up to Dorian and it pained me for what happened next. I hoped that Mayor Havering would still be able to revive her, because I had to put her out of her misery with my sword.*

*Maybe the creeping undead rot had not yet fully taken her over body because I quickly got her back to the mayor and he was able to revive her. After speaking briefly with her and her fiancée, I headed back to Thordan to finally get on with this prisoner escort mission, but not before some rest, another drink or two and some time in one of this town's stores.*

**[Player Note:] – Road to Tasseldale Changes to Archenbridge** - The prisoner escort journey starts out east of Highmoon on the Road to Tasseldale. You will find the route to be broken down into three similar "legs" as it was on the way to Highmoon. Each of these legs of the journey will have their fair share of encounters and hidden treats. In the third leg you will meet up with a fellow Harper named Parra Dieslost who will warn you that your current route to Tasseldale is too dangerous because of a heavy Iron Throne

presence set on your capture. It is here that you must instead travel south through Arch Wood and meet up with someone named Lucas o' The Song staying in the Strangled Ogre Inn in Archenbridge.

There is much to see through this "detour" including areas (like the Pass to Arch Wood (East) Cave), which also have hidden trapdoors that lead down to more goodies. As stated before, we do not intend to walk you through every side quest or bonus area, but just guide you through the main story. Throughout this "detour" it is up to you how much more you want to explore and discover.

You will quickly find yourself back in good old Arch Wood traveling through both the east and west sections. On the southwest side of Arch Wood (West) you will see a transition area behind a waterfall. You need to take this area called Pass to Open Plains and be sure to again keep your eyes peeled for a hidden trapdoor in this cavern. Once you get through this short pass you will be in the Open Plains to Archenbridge. Follow the road to the gate to Archenbridge (but don't forget about the hidden chests!). You'll know you're getting close when you are attacked by a large number of Iron Throne Thugs and their leader right before you reach Archenbridge.

*I must admit, I felt tremendous worry in starting this escort duty and heading out of Highmoon on the east road. Even with the Amulet of Control and the prisoner at my beck and call, I was still apprehensive in having to share the road with another and try to keep them alive.*

*This worry quickly faded as I witnessed such an able and beautiful adventurer stand by my side through hordes of creatures and some Iron Throne agents. She was more than capable of handling herself through our travels. Many times I was surprised when the odds were stacked against us and it seemed we were overwhelmed with attacks, my prisoner and new companion would read aloud one of her scrolls and dispose of many of the creatures that were upon us.*

*Throughout our detoured journey to the new destination of Archenbridge, I found myself wondering if I could forge a relationship with such powerful ally and if she felt the same for me. I had to often remind myself that the only reason she seemed to be so comfortable and in admiration of me was because of the amulet I had that kept her in my grasp. Not to mention that, for now, she was an enemy of the Harper's and thus a new enemy of mine.*

*I shook off all the nonsense and grandiose illusions that I had of my new "friend" and continued to Archenbridge to find this Lucas o' The Song.*

**[Player Note:] – Welcome to Archenbridge** - After you have defeated a large gang of Iron Throne thugs with a tough leader, you will go through the wooden portcullis and enter the busy city called Archenbridge. Just like Highmoon, there is a hefty dose of side quests and component tinkering to do here which helps build your character. Again, we won't walk you through every single "side quest" detail, but we'll just mention them in passing and let you do most of the discovering on your own.

Archenbridge is full of great places to shop. Aside from your average, or even above average shops, there are a couple of areas that have some unique shopping experiences for you. Be sure to visit Drado's to see all of his exotic wares, the Market Square that has three different types of vendors tailored to specific classes and Paulson's Clothing Store for some basic, but as you already know by now, valuable items (see Appendix B - Runes and Talismans at the end of this document). Good stuff awaits you around every corner here!

**[Player Note:] – Plowstal's Smithy** - Aside from your average stores, there are some areas of particular importance that will allow you to "make" certain items if you've taken our advice and collected everything you've come across. Plowstal's Smithy, where the dwarf Zhorr d'Arz tirelessly labors away for your benefit, is a great place to check out. Here you can fix Sully's Link Pin (if you got that from the guy in the mill at Highmoon) and then head back to pick up your reward (it's worth the trip). Also, Zhorr is such a fix it man...umm...dwarf, that if you've been keeping the broken weapons and damaged armor he'll repair them for you at a minimal cost compared to their value in use or gold. On top of all that, he can take a specific collection of the items and combine them to make something pretty cool, but you have to find those things first!

**[Player Note:] – Moll Tingly** - Here is a mysterious and powerful magic user who can combine components to items (either collected or bought) to make you some more worthwhile goodies. Head over to Moll Tingly's Place to see what magic she can weave with some of your collection. (See Appendix A - Item Combos for some of these items.) You will also get a completed journal update from her with a list of items/components that she can work some magic on and make you something special as well.

If you choose, you can also help Gertrude out with the elemental problem in her Bath House and visit Kevin's house to see one of the largest book collections in all of southern Cormyr (read, but don't steal!). While making your rounds in the busy city you will find out that a particular annoying thief has been stealing from many of the citizens in Archenbridge. If you would like to help them with this problem you can try and solve this little mystery and reap yet another reward. Avi, the one in charge of this investigation may be a little too distracted in Madam Monroe's House of Pleasure, but we are sure you will be able to solve this caper...especially if you talk to Maggie.

Weather or not you chose to do any or all of this is up to you. Ultimately, you will need to head over to The Strangled Ogre and look for Lucas O' the Song. He will inform you that you must speak with Father Clutos in the Temple of Mielikki (in Archenbridge) to find out the truth about your prisoner. You may chose to leave your prisoner with him while you do this last bit of duty, or keep them along for the company (and help in some serious battles to come). To get the help you need Father Clutos cannot perform the truth spell but will introduce you to someone who will, after a significant favor for him of course.

*As I made my way into the walls of Archenbridge I felt a strange sense that my assistance was needed once again. Much like the busy little town of Highmoon, the small city of Archenbridge was in desperate need of a hero.*

*So before even heading over to The Strangled Ogre Inn to look for Lucas, I decided to stop by all the glorious shops and places of interest to see what kind of honorable mess I could get myself into this time. I cleared the elemental vermin out Gertrude's Bath House, found some exotic wares at Drado's, paid Zhorr to fix Sully's link pin and to make me quite a few useful items, read a few of Kevin's books, and watched Moll work her magic on some of my stuff. In just a short period of time I knew these citizens had talent, but needed my help in figuring out who the local thief was. Maggie certainly helped me get to the "bottom" of it!*

*After more than my fair share of good deeds for the day, I decided to get on with the business at hand and find Lucas in The Strangled Ogre Inn. He instructed me to head over to the Temple of Mielikki and talk to Father Clutos. Wouldn't you know it, the dedicated father couldn't help me out directly, but did promise me a meeting with someone who could...after I helped him out with small favor that quickly turned into a rather large one. What is it with me and all these favors?*

**[Player Note:] – Check the Temple Catacombs** - Father Clutos promises to introduce you to the Archenpriest of Mielikki, but not before you check out some recent sightings of abnormal activities below the temple. What starts out as a routine investigation mission suddenly becomes a deadly rout of some of the toughest creatures yet. It is in your best interest to have some help along these undead halls because some of the encounters put up a good fight, but if your trusty new battle companion (prisoner) comes along for the ride then it is also up to you to keep him/her alive. You will see that this "once easy task" may not be so simple anymore.

Right from the start you will be faced with two tough vampires. Depending on your character class and whatever arsenal you have at your disposal, it may be in your best interest to tell your prisoner to stand their ground behind you while you try and dispose of the vampires. Take those beneficial potions and call up whatever summons (don't forget the whistle) and companions you may have and go to town.

Throughout the catacombs you will encounter all forms of undead and spirits. If you do not have any items that protect you from fear then you may want to make sure that you have a full stock of Clarity Potions because the mummies can do a good job of scaring you. (We've found that clarity or immunity to mind affecting spells - for dragons and undead - have been invaluable in this adventure and probably will be throughout the series.)

Keep your eyes peeled for trapdoors that lead down to the Temple Catacombs Lower Level for some little rooms with big fights and good treasure. You'll notice that the path may be locked, but you can always work your way down and back up to the other side (another developing theme) to get to the areas that were at one time unreachable.

After working your way back up from the lower levels to the other side and clearing out the rest of the upper area, you will eventually come into a large area with a raised platform and a coffin on top with many colorful rays of light. It is here that you will have the chance to talk to the Resurrected Vampire after clearing out a couple of minor undead in the area. The key to defeating this boss is in his coffin up on the colorful platform. Once you figure that out, he shouldn't pose too much of a problem.

Once you have defeated this aberration, even among the dead, you can head back up to Father Clutos to report your findings and you will notice that the Archenpriest is with him and eager to talk to you.

*Their touch was cold, haunting, and could weaken the strongest man to the core. As soon as I headed up the wooden bridge in the catacombs and watched, not one, but two fearless vampires charging right for me, I knew I was in trouble. I quickly yelled for Darlo to stay back, downed a Potion of Greater Stoneskin, and blew into Bulgar's Bird Whistle for some help. It all happened so fast, the way they almost seemed to glide down upon us, but I drew my sword just in time to block one of the vampire's deadly lunges.*

*I fought on with determination and between grasping breaths downed a whole bottle of a strong healing potion just before hacking away at the second vampire. I remember a great fear welling up in my throat after the first battle in the catacombs ended. I wasn't sure if this task would be one that the two of us would succeed in. We drank many beneficial potions and called up more flying companions after a much needed rest and headed deeper into the catacombs. Luckily, many of the encounters were not as bad as the vampires in the beginning, but we did run in to our fair share of tough fights. Skeleton warriors with great swords, specters that quickly moved in, ghoul lords that could freeze you in your tracks, and the slow moving stench of death in those mummies, all still haunt me on sleepless nights.*

*After clearing out the lower level of the catacombs and making our way back up into the other side, we came across another vampire. This one was different than the few we had faced up to this point. He had an aura of power around him and spoke to me, begging for my flesh. I knew that his power was unique and probably had something to do with all the recent undead activity I had seen the past few days. But he, or it, had also revealed too much to me, because I understood that its strength came from where he lay. So I ran from his cold touch and destroyed the coffin. Then returned to Darlo's side, along with a few of our distracting bat companions, and methodically put this "awakened death" to rest.*

*We left their weary and shaken, but glad when we reported back to Father Clutos that we had eliminated the "small" problem. I was also delighted to see the Archenpriest with him, so we could get the truth spell over with - repaying my debt to Calum - and I could crawl into a soft bed in an inn far away from this madness.*

**[Player Note:] – Spider Hunting** - Archenpriest Jorinson will perform the truth spell for you but he needs a spell component in the form of a spider queen's heart before this can be done. You will have to travel to the Old Ruined Keep area west of Archenbridge and work your way through more creepy crawlers to complete this final mission.

On the way to the ruined keep you will come across Semper Fidelis, a merchant down on his luck, who needs you to help retrieve a Bag of Holding that contains a few valuable items that he had to leave behind. Before you actually go into the building you will come across a significant number of spiders, some angry bears, and a couple of tough Giant Magelings. Again, some kind of Clarity or immunity to mind affecting spells are good against these two colossal spell wielders because they can confuse you. Once inside the Ruined Keep house you will find many more crawling encounters along with Semper's bag so make sure you search through all the dropped treasure.

Continue through to the back of the building and take the door down to the level below the Ruined Keep. You will notice a locked door immediately on your left that will not be accessible to go through until later (from the other side). Work your way up through this underground area to the center of the map and then over to the northeast. Some of the umberhulk encounters may give you a little trouble with their ability to daze you so be ready. Eventually you will work your way back around counter clockwise, all the way towards the earlier locked door and face the Spider Queen. She will put up more than a normal spider fight, along with many of her underlings so, as always, be sure to save often. After you have retrieved the Spider Queen's heart head back to Archenbridge (don't forget to stop by and drop Semper's bag off for a nice reward).

*Alas, that bed would have to wait...*

*Throughout my travels these last few days I have encountered many vile and deadly creatures. It seemed so long ago, when I had first met up with Calum to return the favor, that I thought I'd never want to see another spider, but to finish this important mission I had to wade through another infested area.*

*After disposing of a large nest of them inside the keep I headed down to the lower level to find this Spider Queen. The halls down here were dank and dirty and you could hear the beasts crawling all about. Each screech of a dying spider sent a chill up my spine. And if I thought that was bad, battling with a few umberhulks made me realize just how precious life can be.*

*Darlo and I made our way through the keep's lower level and eventually came upon the Spider Queen. There were spiders, and other creatures, coming at us from every direction in this big room. We disposed of them one by one, but found ourselves struggling for each breath as we battled the Spider Queen.*

*As soon as the queen fell, so did I, to my knees in exhaustion. I grabbed the heart and put it in my pack for the trip back to Archenbridge, ate some of my rejuvenating cooked meat from some recent bear kills, and had truly hoped THAT would be the last spider I would see for a long time.*

**[Player Note:] – Chapter 1: Escort Duty Conclusion** - After bringing the Spider Queen's heart back to the Archenpriest you will see the casting of the truth spell on your prisoner (if you dropped the prisoner off earlier with Lucas you'll need to go back and get him/her). It is here that you will learn the truth that you had hoped for so long now, and where one journey ends and a new one begins. You can choose to load chapter 2 in the series, A Harper's Tale - Hooknose Crag if you have that MOD downloaded (as of June 1, 2003 Chapter 2 has not yet been released and is in the early story development

phase) or stick around to take care of any unfinished business like visiting some shops or completing any other side missions (i.e., did you bring back the fixed link pin to Sully yet?)

We hoped you enjoyed Chapter 1 in *A Harper's Tale* series. Thanks for playing! And don't forget to vote and comment on anything because we encourage all of your feedback. Keep your eyes peeled for Chapter 2 on the Vault!

*Mystra did answer my prayers that day. This prisoner and suspected agent of the Iron Throne that I had spent so much time with over the last few days, who had fought by my side like a true friend, had found a place in my heart. Even if I had some kind of control on her in the beginning, I found out that in the end she was telling the truth all the long about more than her just being innocent.*

*I know there is still a long path that lies before me, and, more importantly, I hope before "us". It is along side my new trusted companion Darlo that I am glad to be in the service of the Harpers. Thankful that Calum called on me to return a favor, I felt stronger, more prepared, and happier than I had ever felt in my life. I just wasn't sure at the time, how long this elation would last. Little did I know that things would so drastically change in the coming year and even sooner for me in Hooknose Crag.*

~ El

## Appendix A (Item Combos)

	Ruined Dragon Eggs	Spider Venom Sac	Fire Beetle Belly	Ettercap's Poisonous Web Gland	Cupid's Leaf	Paralysis Crystal	Sticky Rags	Ogre's Tusk	Rod of Frost Diamond
<b>Amulets</b>	Cast Bull's Strength 1x day	Cast Melf AA 1x day	Cast Fireball 1x day	Cast web 2X day	Cast Charm Person 2X day	Cast Hold Person 2X day	Cast Slow 2X day	Cast Endurance 1x day	Cast Ice Storm 1x day
<b>Rings</b>	Cast Bull's Strength 1x day	Cast Melf AA 1x day	Cast Fireball 1x day	Cast web 2X day	Cast Charm Person 2X day	Cast Hold Person 2X day	Cast Slow 2X day	Cast Endurance 1x day	Cast Ice Storm 1x day

## Appendix B (Runes and Talismans)

	Rune of Strength	Rune of Dexterity	Rune of Intelligence	Rune of Wisdom	Rune of Constitution	Rune of Charisma	Talisman of Will	Tali Fort
<b>Color</b>	<b>Blue</b>	<b>Yellow</b>	<b>Green</b>	<b>Purple</b>	<b>Brown</b>	<b>Red</b>	<b>Orange</b>	<b>Pink</b>
<b>Boots</b>	+2 Str Boots	+2 Dex Boots	+2 Int Boots	+2 Wis Boots	+2 Con Boots	+2 Cha Boots	+3 Will Boots	+3 F

<b>Bracers</b>	+2 Str Bracers	+2 Dex Bracers	+2 Int Bracers	+2 Wis Bracers	+2 Con Bracers	+2 Cha Bracers	+3 Will Bracers	+3 F
<b>Amulets</b>	+2 Str Amulet	+2 Dex Amulet	+2 Int Amulet	+2 Wis Amulet	+2 Con Amulet	+2 Cha Amulet	+3 Will Amulet	+3 F
<b>Rings</b>	+2 Str Ring	+2 Dex Ring	+2 Int Ring	+2 Wis Ring	+2 Con Ring	+2 Cha Ring	+3 Will Ring	+3 F
<b>Cloaks</b>	+2 Str Cloak	+2 Dex Cloak	+2 Int Cloak	+2 Wis Cloak	+2 Con Cloak	+2 Cha Cloak	+3 Will Cloak	+3 F
<b>Shields</b>	+2 Str Shield	+2 Dex Shield	+2 Int Shield	+2 Wis Shield	+2 Con Shield	+2 Cha Shield	+3 Will Shield	+3 F
<b>Helmets</b>	+2 Str Helmet	+2 Dex Helmet	+2 Int Helmet	+2 Wis Helmet	+2 Con Helmet	+2 Cha Helmet	+3 Will Helmet	+3 F
<b>Belts</b>	+2 Str Belt	+2 Dex Belt	+2 Int Belt	+2 Wis Belt	+2 Con Belt	+2 Cha Belt	+3 Will Belt	+3 F